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CHAPTER XVI

FISHING AND HUNTING

FISHING and hunting will be discussed only cursorily in these pages. It is, however, necessary just to touch on these activities in order to be able to complete the economic calendar of work.

Fishing Methods.

The Bemba cannot be described as a fishing tribe. As a food, fish makes one of their favourite relishes, and is reckoned nearly as great a treat as meat. They catch fish whenever they can, and very much appreciate dried fish, but such food is regarded rather as a sudden piece of luck than as a regular article of diet, and fishing itself in a greater part of the country is an amusing pursuit, particularly when undertaken communally, rather than a serious means of getting one's livelihood. Among the neighbouring Bisa, a fishing tribe living on Lake Bangweolu, each fish is known by name and referred to as such, and every child in the community is able to pick out the different sorts correctly from a heap. But among the Bemba, though different types are recognized by the older men, the rest of the natives just speak of 'fish'. The Bisa regularly dry fish and trade it over the country. They have a fixed system of prices and reckon each catch carefully in terms of financial profit. The Bemba, on the other hand, only sell fish occasionally, at certain seasons of the year, and then by a process of casual barter. Apart from those who live by the banks of big rivers they are indifferent boatmen and handle clumsily the paddles of the dug-out canoes at river fords. Along the Chambesi, Luansenshi, and other big rivers there are, however, definite fishing villages recognized by the natives as such. These villages remain fixed in one position year in year out. Here we find fishing by one method or another going on all the year round, a complex system of ownership of weirs and rights of use of ponds, and special fishing ceremonies such as are not found over the rest of the plateau. The inhabitants of these villages are definitely specialist fishermen, distinguished by name as *umulonga* (plur. *abalonga*) and considered very exclusive and even dour by the rest of the Bemba. The latter discuss the habits of these fishermen as though they were almost a

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race apart, although in reality they differ from other Bemba merely in regard to their fixed habitation, greater degree of intermarriage, and independence of their neighbours. It will be best to sketch fishing methods in general as they are practised all over the country, and then to describe the more complex type of occupation characteristic of these riverine villages.

Bemba methods of fishing, whether by trapping, netting, or poisoning, are only successful in shallow waters. For this reason fish are only caught easily during two seasons of the year: (*a*) *April and May*, i.e. at the end of the rains when the waters are falling on the flats and banks, and the fish may be caught returning to the big rivers from the smaller streams and backwaters, where they had gone to breed a few months earlier. (*b*) *September to November*, i.e. when the level of the water in the rivers has fallen to its lowest and trapping or netting is possible in the main body of the stream, and poison can be used in the smaller rivers. Fish may also be caught sometimes on their way upstream to breed in January or February. But in a river as big as the Chambesi fishing of one kind or another is practised all the year round.

The natives recognize no close season for breeding. Questioned as to why they wish to trap fish that are full of eggs or young fish that are undersized, they answer in some such terms as, 'Well, it is no use leaving the fish for some one else to catch, is it?'

(*a*) *Methods.*

1. *Fish poisoning.* The simplest method of catching fish is by the use of a stupefying poison known as *ububa*, which is obtained from the crushed leaves of a bushy plant (*Tephrosia*) cultivated especially for the purpose in any village near a stream.[1] Fish poisoning (*ukusungilo buba*) is a co-operative activity in which the whole village, men, women, and children, join, and which is quite unskilled. The whole village may go out together under the orders of the headman, or a group of villagers may plan their own expedition. The best time of year for such fishing is August to November, when the waters are at their lowest.[2] On the smaller rivers such fishing parties are

[1] Mr. E. B. H. Goodall in *Some Wemba Words*, 1921, states that *buba* is used as a collective term to cover all forms of fish poison collected from various roots and leaves, including the cultivated plant, *kowamushi*, and different forest trees and shrubs, but I only heard the name used for the former.

[2] I have known natives try to fish by this method much earlier, i.e. in July and August, but this will depend on the height of the water.

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backwaters nets can be set by one method or another practically throughout the year.

Other methods. The Bemba also fish with hooks (*amaloba*) baited with fish and slung on a rope across a big stream, when the waters are low in August, but I never saw this done. Younger men say this method was introduced by the white people since they know that fish hooks are now only to be obtained at European stores. Older fishermen told me that, on the contrary, this type of fishing was practised from the earliest times, and that the Bemba 'always' knew how to make rough iron hooks for the purpose.

A few fish are said to be caught on the Chambesi flats when the floods are falling by means of plaited screens of grass (*uluangwa*) by which the women cut off small fish from the stream, but, indeed, when the waters are drying up at this season odd fish are caught here and there in all sorts of ways. I have often seen casual passers-by step off a raised pathway through fields flooded to a depth of six inches and catch fish of about ½ lb. to 1 lb. in their hands in the grasses, or else spear them (*ukumela*).

To summarize, it can be said that the Bemba who live near the smaller streams of the district are for the most part unskilled fishermen, and rely on the low waters of dried up rivers, and flooded banks to catch a few fish at certain months of the year, but never get sufficient to dry or trade. They have no organized system of exploiting the resources of the rivers or definite leadership in this activity, but catch whatever they can during the breeding season, or before the fish are full grown.[1] In the regular fishing villages, on the other hand, the activity is almost continuous throughout the year. There are four or five different methods of fishing practised, and the men are universally employed in this pursuit. They value their reputation as skilled fishermen and know a considerable amount about the different types of fish caught. Though there is not sufficient fish caught to permit of regular trading, yet it is quite common for a man to be able to pay his 10*s.* tax by sporadic sales of dried fish.

6. *Fishing rights and ceremonies.* Fishing rights, like the rules of use of land, cannot be considered apart from the peoples' beliefs as to the spiritual ownership of food resources. The produce of

[1] How far the people are destroying their supplies of fish by this means does not yet seem clear. Cf. Report on the fish of Lake Bangweolu by C. K. Ricardo and R. J. Jones, December 1936.

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226 423 [501] fishing also, technically speaking, any man can set a net in the smaller rivers, but *de facto* few except the residents are able to do so for want of nets and canoes. Boats are individually owned, and though they may be borrowed, a man who takes a boat and catches fish in it or even kills meat on the opposite side of the river must share his luck with the owner.[1] It is rare to find more than one canoe in a village on a small stream. At the village of the Paramount, where there is much traffic over the Kalungu river, there are only two boats available for crossing and fishing. For this reason the inhabitants of fishing villages in practice have the monopoly of net setting.

226 •463 [777] In the specialized fishing villages the situation is changed. Magico-religious ritual becomes more complex and is closely associated with rights of use of the river.[2] When I spent some time on the banks of the Chambesi in the territory of Mwaba and Nkula, and even on the Kalungu near the Paramount's village, I constantly heard men being picked out as being lucky fishers, and the phrase 'an expert on boats' (*aleshibishyo bwato*) means not only a man who knows how to handle canoes, but who is reputed to have powerful fishing magic. Here also definite rites of prayer [791] to the Land Spirits must be performed at the opening of the trapping and the netting seasons, and these are in the hands of economic specialists with magic powers (*icibinda*, plur. *ifibinda*) who are at one and the same time the most knowledgeable fishers, the leaders in co-operative enterprise, and the priests of the local [793] deities.[3] This office is strictly hereditary in the line of the man first given the title by the original chief. I never saw any of the fishing rites of the Chambesi, but often heard them described as big gatherings of all the neighbouring villagers who assembled

[1] Large trees fit for boat-making are rare and must sometimes be fetched from a distance, usually after paying tribute to the chief of the district, nowadays 5*s*. per tree. To hollow out a canoe with an axe-head takes a man about two months, or a team of seven or eight men three weeks. The shaping of the prow head, which is merely pointed and not carved or ornamented in any way is the task of specialists who are paid about 3*s*., so that the whole process is an expensive one. It is characteristic of the present Bemba economic system that such boats have to be sold for about £1. 10*s*. in spite of the labour taken to make them. Why? 'Because a man in this country would not find more than £1. 10*s*.'

[2] Even the launching of canoes which is done in the smaller rivers without ceremony has its own special ritual on the Chambesi River (*ukusapiko bwato*).

[3] Specialist elephant hunters with magic powers are also known as *ifibinda*. The priests of local land deities are known as *shimiapepo*. The headmen of the fishing villages combine both functions.

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first to watch the blessing of the traps and the weirs and later to invoke the help of the spirits at the setting of the nets on the big fishing pools (*ifishiba*). On both occasions the priest in charge asks those present if they have any grievance one against the other (*akantu pa mutima*), for the *umupashi* of an injured person might prevent the catching of fish by the rest. He then calls on the name of each of the Land Spirits, strikes the nets to bless them, and says, 'You, our spirits, now we are beginning to work, we people. Give us relish this year that we may eat and be satisfied.' It is important to notice that by the performance of such rites the *icibinda* definitely initiates the fishing season and synchronizes the activities of all the fishermen, and that these ceremonial duties are the basis of important economic privileges, which he maintains in spite of the overlordship of the territorial chief. This balance of interests between the local priest-headman and the chief produces a complicated system of fishing rights.

Permanent weirs are inherited in the matrilineal line and their ownership is often associated with the headmanship of fixed villages. The owner, besides his religious duties, allots trap holes in the weirs to different individuals who set their *miono* there. For instance, in one village the headman had divided the trap holes of a big weir between his sons and brothers, allotting two or three to each. Trap holes may be lent in return for a proportion of the catch, and in some cases a new-comer may obtain the right to build a small mud dike behind the main one giving tribute in return. Setting of nets arranged by casual agreement on the small rivers is strictly prohibited where fishing is valuable, unless the permission of the headman is obtained.

The *icibinda*, besides his right of allotting trap holes and giving permission to set nets, gets a proportion of the catch and also collects tribute for the chief. At one Chambesi village the headman (Molema) got one basket out of every three caught by each individual by the trapping method and two out of every three caught with nets. He sent to the territorial chief (Citimukulu) three baskets a year, two of these on the latter's special demand. In the case of some valuable fishing pools the territorial chiefs have secured special rights and can organize their own fishing expeditions (e.g. at Ca Kandwe, in Nkula's territory).

The sociology of fishing villages. Besides regulating the use of fishing resources this system of rights and ceremonies leaves its

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impression on the structure of the fishing villages. We have seen that the typical Bemba local unit is a loosely organized bilateral kinship group with a constant tendency to split into new communities. Among the fishing villages the value of the economic resources, and particularly the rights of ownership over the *ifishiba*, makes for fixed residence, although a very large village group would make cultivation difficult. New communities therefore divide off, but remain near to and closely attached to the old and under the same leader. Rights of inheritance of fishing weirs strengthen the cohesion of the matrilineal group since succession follows this line, and these Chambesi village communities are matrilineal lineage groups, localized in one district with their male members predominantly of one clan—a more formal kinship structure than usually found elsewhere in Bemba territory.

The headmanship of these villages obviously carries with it pronounced economic advantages. Such appointments are also a matter of great concern to the chief of the territory, who is dependent on the loyalty of these river headmen for his main supply of fish. It thus happens that the Bemba belief in the rule of matrilineal succession to village headmanships, and in the supernatural powers of the head of a local kinship group over the economic resources of a district, is sometimes in conflict with the territorial chief's conception of his own complete overlordship of the whole food supplies of the *icalo*. Under present-day conditions these interests seem equally balanced. The chief's right to appoint headmen in his district has been confirmed under the Native Courts Ordinance, and he does not scruple to use it. I have heard Citimukulu rating the villagers of one of the Chambesi communities, saying, 'You on the Chambesi, you! If you don't bring more tribute I shall chase you away and give the village to some one else.'

A similar attempt of the chief to secure control of valuable fishing resources is seen in the case of the fish-pool known as Ca Kabwe, belonging to the chief Nkula. This pool was originally in charge of two headmen, Sunga Kasawila, and Muŋwena, but the late Nkula chased them away on account of their 'pride' and installed his own brother in charge, merely keeping the hereditary headmen as *ifibinda* to carry out the necessary fishing rites at the beginning of the season.

But since the local clan group is composed of skilled fishermen who cannot in the last instance be replaced, the history of these

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riverine communities shows that their position is generally secure. The present structure of the Molema group illustrates this fact.

Some Chambesi villages. This group of fishing communities lies on the right bank of the Chambesi near the wooden bridge that used to carry the traffic from Chinsali to Kasama. Here the most important sources of the fish supply are (*a*) the main body of the river itself (*ku milongo*); (*b*) certain backwaters or ponds cut off from the main body of the river (*ifishiba*); (*c*) dikes or weirs built over the wide flats on the river banks. The first headman put in charge of these valuable fisheries was Mulilo, a member of the Lua clan, who was given control of the *ifishiba* at the time of Citimukulu Sampa, i.e. about three generations ago. He was succeeded by his maternal nephew on whose death the then Citimukulu (Ponde) put in a son of his own (the present Mukuikile) to hold the job. The latter failed. He was unpopular. He was an outsider among the Bena Lua. He was not a fisherman and could not perform the annual fishing rites. Temperamentally too he was described as a man who 'did not control his heart sufficiently to found a successful community' (*tatekelo mutima uakwe ua kumone cifulo*). He finally went off to take a job as a cook at Livingstone and the control of the fishing returned to the hands of the Lua clan, and two men in the direct line of matrilineal succession have succeeded to the office of Mulilo. With the growth of this community during four generations three other villages have split off, but have remained under the control of Mulilo. The first village to split off was given to Molema, a brother of the then Mulilo, who was appointed during the reign of Makumba, the first Citimukulu. Two other villages were given to Sampa and Kafoko during the present reign. In this group of four villages three of the headmen (Mulilo, Molema, and Kafoko) are own brothers, while Sampa, though actually their maternal nephew, ranks as their superior since he succeeded to the title of his maternal grandfather and hence became their *nalume*. In this case Mulilo is the senior and gives advice; Molema is the *icibinda* in the sense that he is the luckiest fisher; and Sampa actually utters the prayers during the fishing rites. I know no other case in which four Bemba villages remain united closely together, joining in common economic activities, acknowledging the leadership of one headman, and performing ceremonies to the ancestral spirits together. The value of the fisheries appears to have determined this form of social grouping.

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Hunting.

224 Every Bemba is a hunter by desire and enthusiasm, but in actual fact game is not now very plentiful in the area—a situation for which the white people blame the black and black the white. Whether there has really been a considerable change in the supply of game since the coming of the European I do not know. White men certainly use more powerful weapons than the muzzle-loading guns imported by Arabs in the early days, and motor traffic through the country scares the buck near the main roads, but at the same time natives are not allowed to hunt elephant, hippo, and a number of the larger buck which were formerly available for them. It can only be said with certainty that hunting is a traditional activity which has its roots in the past, and that natives still look back to a golden age of plentiful game. Although meat does not now contribute largely to the people's diet, yet the Bemba still speak of hunting constantly, surround it with magico-religious rites, attach to it a special mythology, and spend a good deal of their time on it. It was interesting to note that in the copper belt many homesick recruits describing their tribal villages in glowing colours, ended with: 'And we hunt there every day'. In actual fact no Bemba does hunt daily or anything like it. The statement merely showed how their imaginations still lingered round their days of enjoyment in the village. Like the sportsmen of this country, they enjoy a day's shooting even if it brings little or no results, and I should prophesy that they would pursue an inedible animal with the same ardour and endurance as the European chases the fox.

[463] The existence of specialist hunters and organized hunters' guilds has been described as characteristic of the Central Bantu, to which group the Bemba belong.[1] At present such guilds no longer exist in this area, although Melland has recorded their presence among the neighbouring Alunda.[2] Hunter magicians, that is to say skilled hunters with magic powers which give them rights of leadership or a monopoly over resources, exist as they do in many other Bantu societies,[3] and their position corresponds to that of the fishermen

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[1] Cf. p. 18.

[2] F. H. Melland, op. cit., p. 267.

[3] Cf. Junod's account of the *maphisa* or specialist hunters of the Thonga, and the special villages of elephant and hippo hunters he also mentions, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 59, 68. Also Doke, op. cit., pp. 321, 325.

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(*d*) *Spears, bows, dogs, and guns.* The Bemba occasionally hunt in twos and threes with spears and dogs. Trained dogs are very valuable—about 10*s*.—and hard to buy. I never saw hunters go out with dogs, but I know that they are extremely skilful in throwing spears at a distance of about twenty feet, and that they sometimes kill small duiker in this manner. Bows and arrows are carried by very old men only and used to shoot at monkeys raiding gardens. A bow is handed down ceremoniously to a dead man's heir but is not often used in the hunt. It is the ambition of every native to own a muzzle-loading gun, which he can purchase for about 30*s*. and obtain a Government licence to use. Many Bemba still go to the mines for no other purpose than to earn the money for a gun, which seems to promise security and prestige in their old age. However, many of these guns are in fact more deadly to the hunter than to the quarry, since they are rammed with shot, slag iron, and rusty nails till the long-suffering barrels explode. It is unlikely that many buck are killed in this way.

European rifles are owned only by hunters employed by Europeans, or chiefs. The Bemba are said to be skilled trackers and think nothing of spending two or three days in pursuit of game. Game which is killed with a gun is the property of the shooter, to divide as he pleases, after he has given a portion to the nearest headman or chief. There is no special ritual attached to shooting, although the hunter may ask a blessing from the headman if he wishes, and in any case calls on his *imipashi* and carries magic charms.

(*e*) *Elephant hunters.* The Bemba elephant hunters were typical magician-specialists (*ifibinda*), i.e. they possessed both skill and the magic necessary to give them success. Elephants were killed formerly by the aid of weighted spears of specially heavy make by hunters known as *bashimunini*, with dogs and spears and large crowds of beaters by another type of hunter known as *bakalongwe*, or with guns traded from the Arabs by those called *Bafundi*. Nowadays elephant hunters only work for the Government or for certain big chiefs with special permission. The ordinary native is allowed to kill an elephant only when it is actually raiding his garden.

All elephant hunters were under the direct control of the chief in the old days, and he had the monopoly of the ivory so obtained. The chief summoned the hunters, but they were led by the *icibinda*.

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This magician led out his followers when either he or the chief had 'dreamed elephants', after sleeping with their wives with special magic horns placed under the head of the bed. The party was blessed by the chief before leaving, and the *icibinda* carried his magic basket (*icipeshi*), containing charms and pumpkins cut up in small pieces, with him. He also prayed for the blessing of the spirits before the hunt and carried out the necessary magic ceremonies, both before the adventure began and after the animal was killed. Magic assumes a dominant role in this dangerous form of hunting, and both economic leadership and prerogative lies with the man who possesses the required charms. As in the case of fishing specialists, there is a balance of interest between the rights of the chief and those of the *icibinda*. The chief owned the elephants in his district, but he was absolutely dependent for ivory on his specialist elephant hunters with their magic powers.

An elephant hunt sometimes lasted two or three months and the people engaged on them, largely near relatives of the *icibinda*, seem to have been considered as almost specialists. When the hunt was lucky, the tusks of the elephant belonged to the chief, but the meat was divided according to special rule. I have heard it said that the heart, neck, hind legs, and intestines went to the magician, the front legs to the man who first struck the elephant, the back to the man who struck the second, and the chest to the hunter who was the third to wound the animal. Another informant told me that the leg, the liver, the heart, and the brain went to the chief, one front leg to the *icibinda*, and the others to the hunter who wounded the beast. One hundred hairs from the elephant's tail also had to be given to the chief.

Nowadays a few native elephant hunters go out as individuals at the behest of the Government or a chief. They own their own magic and win a high reputation in the community. It seems that a larger proportion of the meat now goes to the chief of the district, who no longer is able to keep the ivory for himself.

Besides the specialist magic of the *icibinda*, elephant charms are complex and of multiple forms. Charms to bring luck to the hunter are sold at high prices (£1 to £5). Sympathetic magic such as the spiking of the dung of the elephant to prevent him moving, or knotting grass across his path to stop his escape is common. Women can affect the fortunes of their hunting husbands by their fidelity or the reverse. Men who kill elephants must be purified

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CHAPTER XVIII

LABOUR AND TIME

I HAVE now described the chief economic activities of the Bemba—agriculture, fishing, and hunting—the pleasures and anxieties connected with them, and the body of empirical knowledge which guides the people in their work. But the whole question of food production has still to be discussed from the labour point of view. Where land is as plentiful as it is in this area, the amount of ground a man can cultivate obviously depends on the labour he can command, the annual sequence of his different activities, and the whole system of economic co-operation by which garden and other work is carried out. Less obviously, but equally certainly, production also depends on the people's economic rhythm, their habits of work, and their method of reckoning time.

Here I should say at once that my observations on the use of time by native cultivators are far from complete. It is difficult, of course, to calculate exactly the time and energy expended on any kind of work which is not subject to industrial conditions—regular hours, output, wages, &c.—but with primitive people who have no conception of a regular working day, and who do not thus calculate by fixed time units, the task is even harder. It would require a specialist study by some one familiar with the economic calendar and methods of work of the Bemba, who was able to concentrate on this particular problem by means of records of individual activities and daily diaries. This I was never able to do for long enough in any one place. I have, however, given such material as I have, both because of the practical importance of this subject and also because it is a sphere in which anthropologists have so far done very little work. I believe my observations on the division of labour, seasonal calendar, &c., are adequate, but the records of daily activities (Appendix, Table E) were only taken in two villages, and then for very short periods.

Division of Labour.

Briefly speaking, there is no specialization of labour in this area except on a basis of sex. Handicrafts—such as basket-making, iron-work, and pottery—are chiefly in the hands of a few individuals,

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462 who are reckoned to have special skill in this direction. Iron-
work is definitely a hereditary craft, but such specialists are very
●463 few in number. None of these craftsmen or women are em-
ployed whole time. They merely take a day off now and then to
ply their trade, whenever any one can be found to employ them.
Our problem is therefore to study the organization of agriculture,
hunting, and fishing rather than different crafts.

462 The sex division of labour has already been indicated in the
descriptive accounts of the different activities. This information
is given in tabular form below for the convenience of readers of
this section.

Food Production

Men	*Women*
Tree-cutting. Sowing. Fencing. Hoeing. Hunting and fishing (nets, spears, and poisoning). Collecting honey.	Branch-piling. Sowing. Harvesting. Hoeing. Fishing (poisoning method). Collecting bush foods.

Domestic Work

	Cooking. Brewing. Fetching water. Mudding floors. Collecting firewood. Making salt and 'soda'.

Other Activities

Building huts and granaries (cutting stakes, mudding walls, thatching). Path-making and clearing. Making furniture, musical instruments, &c. Baskets. Fish traps. Mats (non-specialized). Ironwork. Sewing. Laundering. Bark-cloth (formerly).	Hut-making (preparing clay for walls and whitewashing). Path-cleaning. Pottery.

It will be seen from this table that the only activities for which men are absolutely essential are: tree-cutting, fencing, house-making, hunting, and fishing; although the heavy hoeing should, properly speaking, be men's work rather than women's—that is to say, the men usually hoe up the grass and other roots (*ukusapike fisapi*) and the women follow and cover up the upturned roots with earth (*ukushikila*). It must be noted, however, that there is no strong taboo preventing a man doing a woman's work or vice versa, such as is common among so many primitive peoples. Women do not cut trees and hunt, because they are physically unfitted to do so,

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daughters or grand-daughters as well as for their own daughters. In fact, it increases the reputation of a man of substance to be able to hold such a ceremony. He is said to 'dance the chisungu' of so-and-so (*ukumucindila icisungu*).

The mistress of the ceremonies (*nacimbusa*).[1] The *nacimbusa* organizes the rites, leads the dances and songs, and arranges for the making of the pottery and other emblems required. She is considered to perform a very important service. It is work that demands a detailed knowledge of ritual, industry in carrying through long and even arduous tasks, organizing ability, tact and personality. A successful *nacimbusa* probably has unusual intellectual ability as well as leadership and the power to attract women from surrounding villages to attend a ceremony and to keep a body of helpers alert and interested for some weeks. The *nacimbusa* is usually an elderly woman who has proved herself to be a successful midwife. The same terms are used for both roles. She is commonly, though not by means always, a member of the royal clan, and there is a tendency for the office to be hereditary. A *nacimbusa* will teach the secrets of the chisungu to her brother's daughter, to whom she owes special obligations, and from whom she can demand service, and she may also teach them to her own daughter. But mere heredity is not enough. A young woman must build up a reputation sufficient to win the confidence of parents so that they will call her in to 'dance their daughters' for them. To do this she must show assiduity in attending local ceremonies and attach herself as a special helper to the *nacimbusa*. She must show capacity and personality, and make a name for herself as a successful midwife. I heard from one old woman that a form of initiation of young *banacimbusa* took place in the old days, and that they were rubbed with medicine and paid an initiation fee, but this account was not substantiated.

The *banacimbusa* are treated with great consideration by other women in the community. In the old days they were allowed to wear a feather head-dress (*ngala*), which was reserved for certain chiefs and hereditary counsellors. They were given respect at a chief's court and have to report the carrying out of each chisungu ceremony to the chief. I am not sure whether this is still done at

[1] The plural prefix for nouns describing persons is 'ba'. Hence *banacimbusa*, or *banacisungu*.

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The Ceremony

881 554 463 793 present, but *banacimbusa* are rather wealthier than their fellows owing to the payments they receive, and they carry themselves with considerable dignity and circumstance.

[608] The *nacimbusa* stands in a special relationship to the girl she has initiated throughout her life. She will probably deliver the girl's first child and act as *mbosua*, or special guardian, to the baby.

881 202 576 *The messenger.* In the old days when the exchange of feasts formed a more important part of the ceremony than they do now, the *nacimbusa* was assisted by a woman known as the *nakalamba*, who was employed to invite the guests to the ceremony by rolling on the ground in front of their houses—the Bemba form of obeisance to a chief. They also fetched clay for the pottery and supervised the ritual cooking of the food.

881 584 *The candidates and their bridegrooms.* The initiation candidate is known as the *nacisungu.* As I have said, these girls were usually betrothed before the ceremony, but it was possible to carry out rites in the case of a girl who was not yet affianced. The bridegroom of a betrothed girl takes part in certain of the ceremonies under the title of *shibwinga*, and this term is also extended to the sister or cross-cousin who may replace him in certain parts of the ceremony.

881 593 604 *The relatives.* Other relatives include the girl's parents and her father's sister. The girl's mother is responsible for providing food and beer, and her father's sister is believed to have a special influence over the fertility of her paternal niece and to stand in a special relationship to her. But the ring of relatives is comparatively small. The uxorilocal family is the chief unit involved.

881 533 *The character of the rite.* The chisungu is a popular ceremony involving much dancing and singing. There is a special drum-beat characteristic of chisungu ceremonies which is frequently used at ordinary beer feasts and always used throughout the rite. Drums are beaten inside the initiation hut, and on the dancing space outside, but they are also carried wherever the women go, some miles out into the bush and back again. The singing is accompanied, as always among the Bemba, by the beat of the drums and by the clapping of hands. Some songs are peculiar to the ceremony and are necessary parts of the rite, but some can be sung at other times. All the chisungu dances are of a characteristic type. They

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The former make millet gardens on such land as is clear of water and subsequently plant mounded cassava. Such a two-year sequence may be continued for several years, but many groups abandon cultivation after the first two years. Village gardens are also planted with cassava, and bananas and pineapples are grown. In such gardens, made on low sandbanks denuded of soil by years of cultivation, cassava seldom grows to full maturity owing to the hunger of the cultivators. Some people make an annual migration to the Lunga plain to plant millet, others barter fish for meal. Very little in the way of subsidiary crops is found beyond a little kaffir corn, some beans and sweet potatoes. In the territory of Chief Kasoma(1) the people make a mass migration to cultivable areas in the dry season, June to November.

The *Twa* cultivate little, relying mainly on their fishing with which they get meal by trading. A certain amount of cassava cultivation is found here and there.

HUNTING AND FISHING

While every Bemba is a hunter by inclination, present shortage of game prevents this desire from being fully gratified. While Melland(2) records the existence of organized hunters' guilds and specialized hunters among the Kaonde these do not at present exist among the Bemba, although elephant hunters formerly were specialists. Hunting by traps and pits is neither an organized nor a specialized activity. Net hunting demands communal effort and is often carried out as a form of divination. There is little information on the hunting activities of the other groups; among the swamp peoples (Unga, Twa, Bisa) hunting is subordinated to fishing but the meat of a certain antelope (*lechwe*) was greatly in demand and these animals were hunted so persistently that a protection law has only prevented, recently, their extinction. There was a certain amount of trade in *lechwe* skins worked in designs.

Fishing is not a major activity, though fish is greatly appreciated as a relish and caught whenever possible. There is no regular trade in fish, nor is fishing a whole-time occupation except for certain groups living on the banks of the larger rivers, where there are definite fishing villages with permanent sites where fishing is carried on all the year round, and there is quite a complex system of pond and weir ownership.

Fish are caught by three chief methods: by poisoning, by weirs and by nets. Poisoning is a communal and unskilled activity carried out at the end of the dry season (August-November). Weirs are only in use in November and December before the crocodiles become a menace. Only one type of net is used, a rectangular variety, stretched across the river, at the beginning and end of the dry season.

It is among the swamp peoples, however - the Unga, Twa and, to a lesser extent, the Bisa - that fishing attains greatest importance. Here the land resources are so depleted, by the over-cultivation of areas which are diminishing in size through increasing inundation, that the growing population

(1) Brelsford, 5, 1946. (2) Melland, 1923.